



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

**Thank you for joining the
FY 2024 RCPP Funding
Opportunities webinar!**

We will begin shortly.

**This webinar will be recorded
and posted to the RCPP How
to Apply page.**



Opening Remarks

Jerry Raynor
Director,
Financial Assistance
Programs Division





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Questions?

To submit a question for the Q&A portion please send it to RCPP@usda.gov at any point during the webinar.





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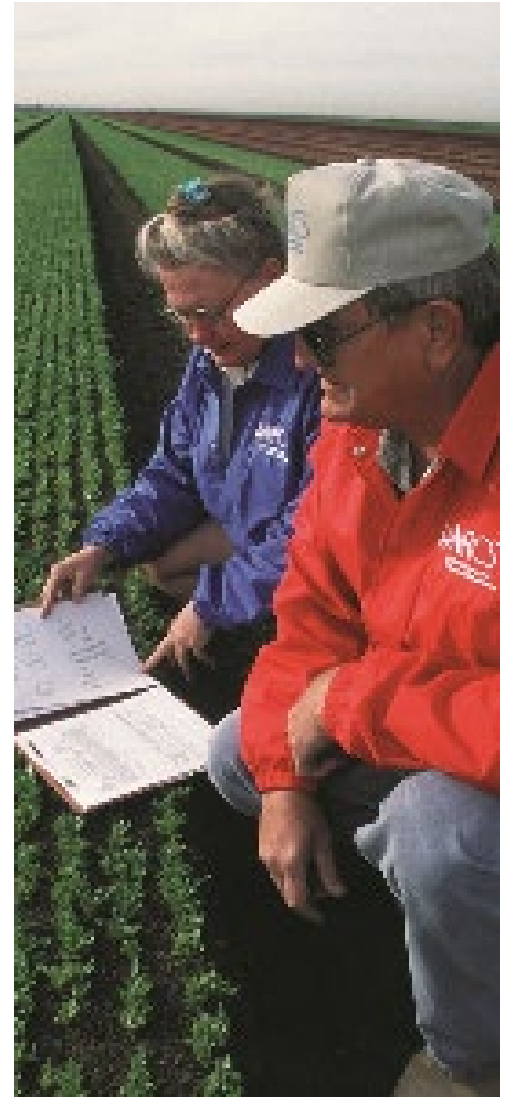
How to Apply for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program in FY 2024

Russell Ames, Projects Branch Chief
Keshia Harvey, Natural Resources Specialist

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

How does RCPP Work?

- **What** - RCPP helps producers protect working agricultural lands to ensure resilience to climate change by increasing the sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife, and related natural resources.
- **How** - NRCS and partners co-invest in conservation activities to address resource concerns at a regional scale.
- **Where** – Private or Tribal agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, or associated land on which an eligible activity would benefit agricultural land.
- **Length** – RCPP Projects are typically five-year agreements.



Who Can Apply for RCPP?

- From 7 CFR 1464.5 (b)

1. An agricultural or silvicultural producer association or other group of producers;
2. A State or unit of local government, including a conservation district;
3. An Indian Tribe;
4. A farmer cooperative;
5. An institution of higher education;
6. A water district, irrigation district, acequia, rural water district or association, or other organization with specific water delivery authority to producers on agricultural land;
7. A municipal water or wastewater treatment entity;
8. An organization or entity with an established history of working cooperatively with producers on agricultural land, as determined by the Secretary, to address -
 - i. Local conservation priorities related to agricultural production, wildlife habitat development, and NIPF management; or
 - ii. Critical watershed-scale soil erosion, water quality, sediment reduction, or other natural resource concerns; or
9. An eligible entity as identified by NRCS pursuant to [7 CFR part 1468](#).



Why Apply for RCPP Funding?

- **Target NRCS funding** and expertise on specific resource concerns within a specific geographic area.
- **Help producers and landowners** receive assistance to address critical resource concerns on private agricultural and forest lands, including lands held by Native American governments and entities.
- **Amplify the impact of NRCS funding** with partner contributions.



How can RCPP funding be used?

- **Financial Assistance (FA)**
 - These funds are used to implement eligible activities on eligible land.
 - Typically, this is 75% of an RCPP Project.
- **Technical Assistance (TA)**
 - To support the implementation of conservation activities such as planning, design, installation, and checkout.
 - To support the RCPP project by conducting outreach, evaluating and reporting on outcomes, and project management.

Remember: RCPP funds pay for eligible activities, not people.



Covered Programs

RCPP Activity Type	Covered Program Authorities	Purpose/Notes
Land Management	EQIP & CSP Enhancements ACEP-ALE/WRE – restoration PL-566 – land treatment	Treatments to restore or improve the land
Rental	CRP	Temporary & based on foregone income
US-Held Easement	ACEP-ALE/WRE & HFRP – easement acquisition	Permanent protection of the land
Entity-Held Easement	ACEP-ALE/WRE & HFRP – easement acquisition	Permanent protection of the land
Watershed Project	PL-566	Infrastructure project requiring an approved watershed <u>plan & design</u>



Project Types

Classic

- NRCS reimburses producers directly for FA activities.
- NRCS often delivers a majority of TA in support of producer contracts and easements.
- Partner's primary role is to provide outreach, measure impact, and deliver partner contributions to amplify NRCS funding.

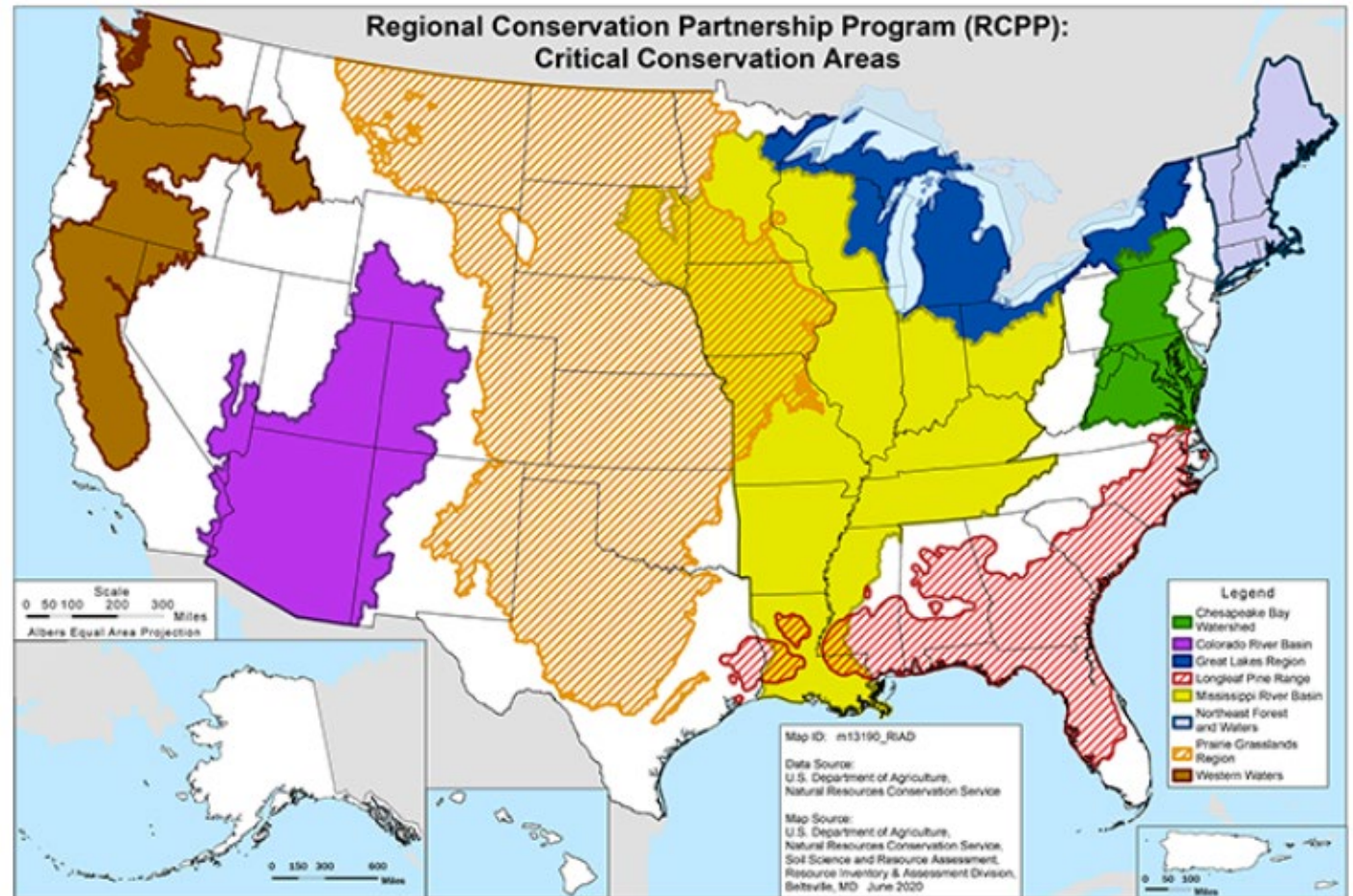
AFAs

- Partner installs practices for producers or reimburses producers for FA activities.
- Partner delivers all project TA in support of producer contracts and easements.
- NRCS support limited to non-delegable tasks such as confirming the eligibility of producers and land, AGI verification, and compliance with NEPA/HEL/WC.
- No limit on the number of AFA **IRA** projects



RCPP Funding Pools

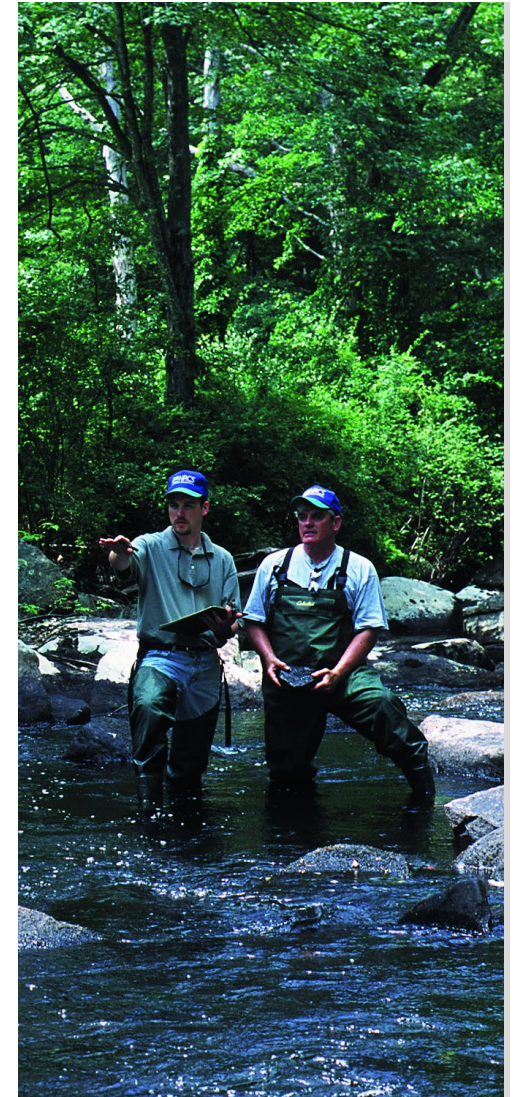
- State/Multi-State
 - Can include any RCPP resource concern or conservation benefit.
- Critical Conservation Areas
 - Project *and producer contracts or easements* under this project must address at least one CCA-specific priority resource concern.
 - A single proposal cannot include multiple CCAs.
 - See the [RCPP website](#) for more information.



How FA Delivery Works in Classic

- LMR and easements FA follows the standard NRCS signup and ranking process.
- Partners may bypass ranking (but not verification of eligibility) if specific producers or parcels are identified in the proposal.

Classic is a better fit for partners that want to influence where NRCS funding is directed, rather than deliver the financial assistance.



Land Management

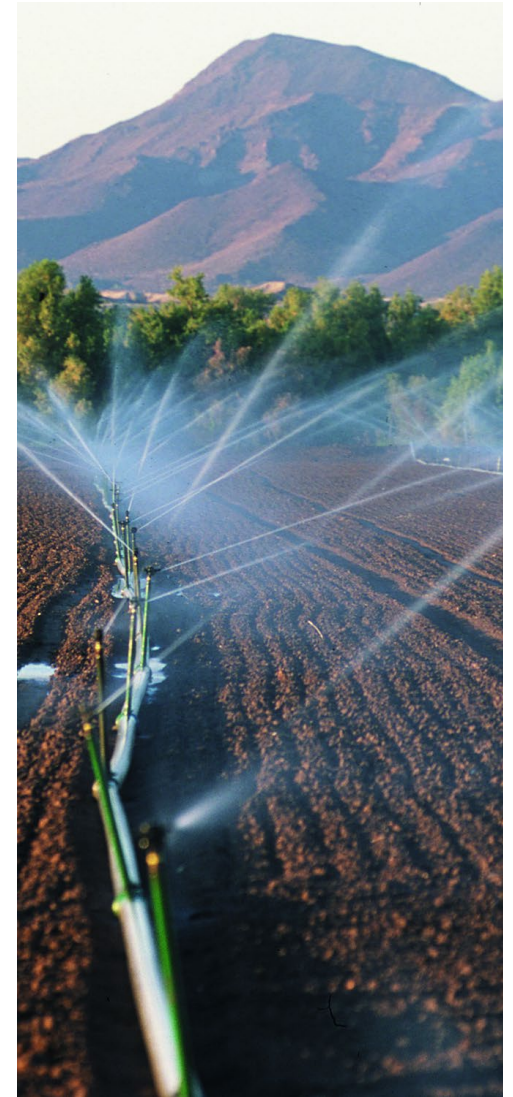
- **What** – Land treatment practices including restoration of land in easements
- **Roles & Responsibilities**
 - In Classic FA is typically delivered by NRCS through producer contracts.
 - Exceptions include work performed by the partner in support of NRCS producer contracts.
 - In AFAs FA is delivered by the lead partner.



Land Rental

- **What** – Typically short-term payments to address a project resource concern.
- **Roles & Responsibilities**
 - In Classic FA is typically delivered by NRCS through producer contracts.
 - In AFAs FA is delivered by the lead partner.

Note: *Cannot duplicate forgone income payments made through Land Management contracts.*



Entity-Held Easements

- For Classic the maximum federal share is:
 - 75% for easements with HU producers **and** a U.S. right of enforcement
 - 50% for easements with HU producers **or** a U.S. right of enforcement.
 - 25% for easements without a U.S. right of enforcement
- For AFA the maximum federal share is:
 - 65% for easements with HU producers
 - 40% for all other easements



Entity-Held Easements

- Who conducts and pays for due diligence?
 - **NRCS Responsibilities** – Limited to hazard material search and appraisal technical reviews.
 - **Partner Responsibilities** – All other due diligence are a partner responsibility and not reimbursed by NRCS.
- Non-federal share of the easements:
 - **Partner Contribution**
 - **Landowner donation** – This may be included as a part of partner contributions



US-Held Easement Deed Types

- **Highly Restrictive**
 - Restoration/protection of native habitats in natural/historic condition.
 - Minimal disturbance, no agricultural uses.
- **Moderately Restrictive**
 - Management of specific habitats to provide conservation benefits.
 - Conservation activities to manage/maintain conservation values.
- **Minimally Restrictive**
 - Protection of agricultural uses, including grazing uses.
 - Rights related to agricultural use remains.

Note: The maximum federal share for US-held easements is up to 100% of the value of the easement, typically calculated by an appraisal.



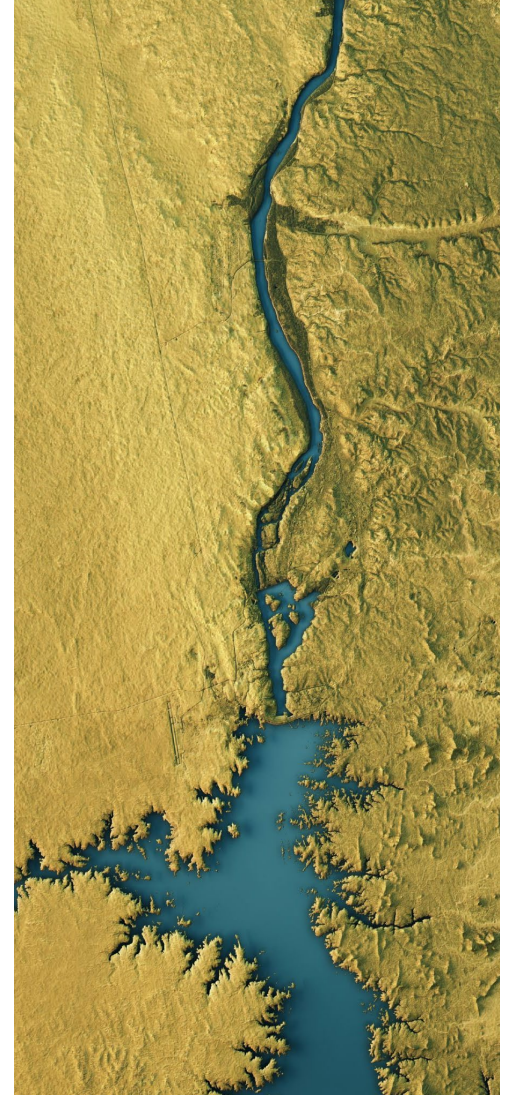
US-Held Easement Basics

- Who conducts and pays for due diligence?
 - **NRCS Responsibilities** – All due diligence such as appraisals, hazardous materials search, etc.
 - **Partner Responsibilities** – In limited situations partner may be able to support NRCS due diligence responsibilities.
- Non-federal share of the easements:
 - **Partner Contribution** – Cash or in-kind
 - **Landowner donation** – This may not be included in partner contributions



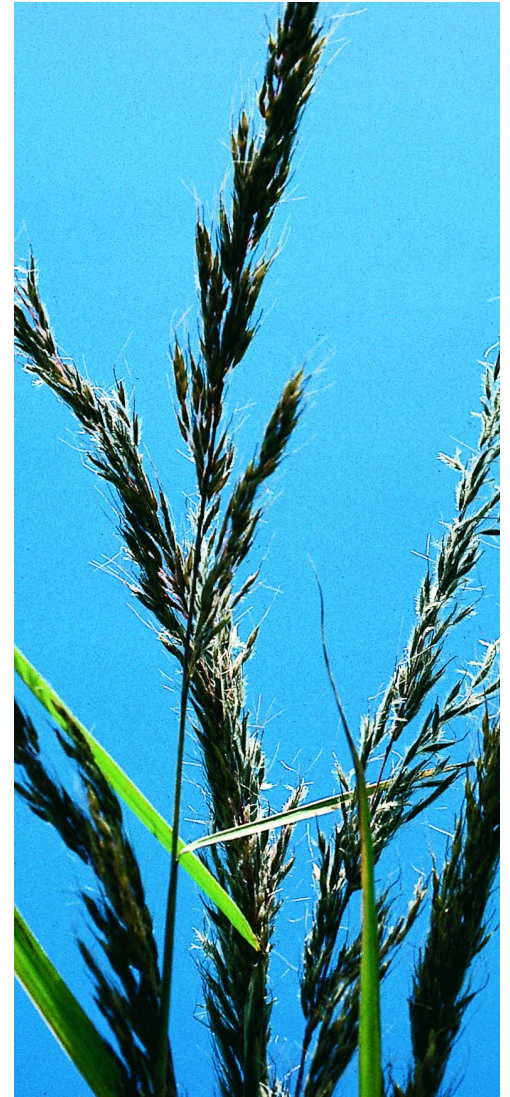
Watershed Projects

- **What** - Structural works to address watershed-scale issues
- **Roles & Responsibilities**
 - Partner is responsible for most TA activities.
 - NRCS responsible for approval of watershed plan and design.
 - Same plan and design requirements as watershed projects funded through PL-566.



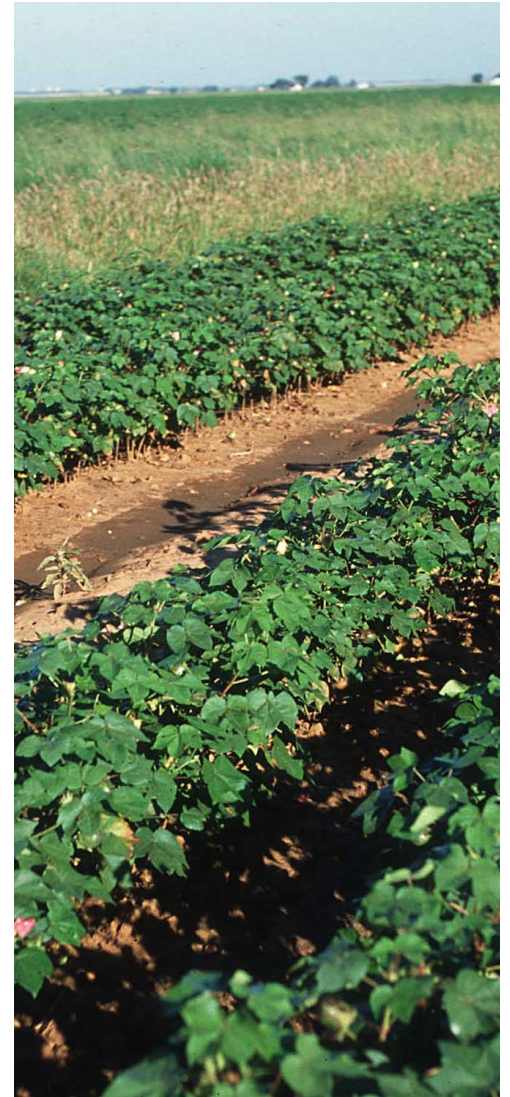
How Technical Assistance Works

- Maximum of 25% of NRCS funding.
- Proposal limits enhancement TA to 7%, this is negotiable if selected.
- Proposal will automatically add ~18% implementation TA based on the amount of FA requested.
- The final breakdown of TA, and how much will be performed by the partner is negotiable after selection.



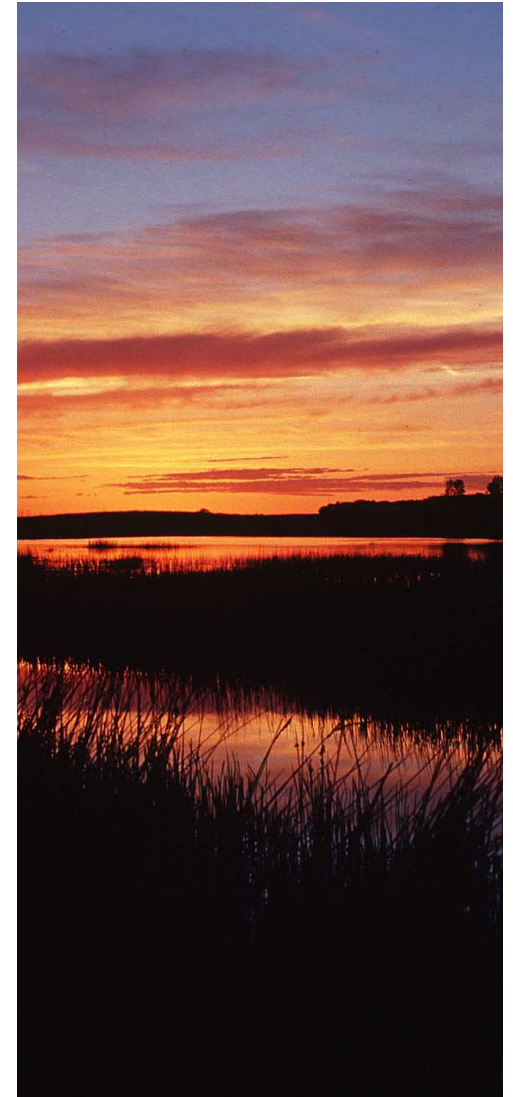
How Technical Assistance Works (cont.)

- **Enhancement TA** = Project-wide activities
 - Outreach
 - Project Management
 - Measuring & Evaluating Project Outcomes
- **Implementation TA** = Support for specific FA contracts.
 - For Classic follows the NRCS planning process.
 - Classic projects will require some amount of NRCS TA.
 - AFA projects typically have no NRCS TA.



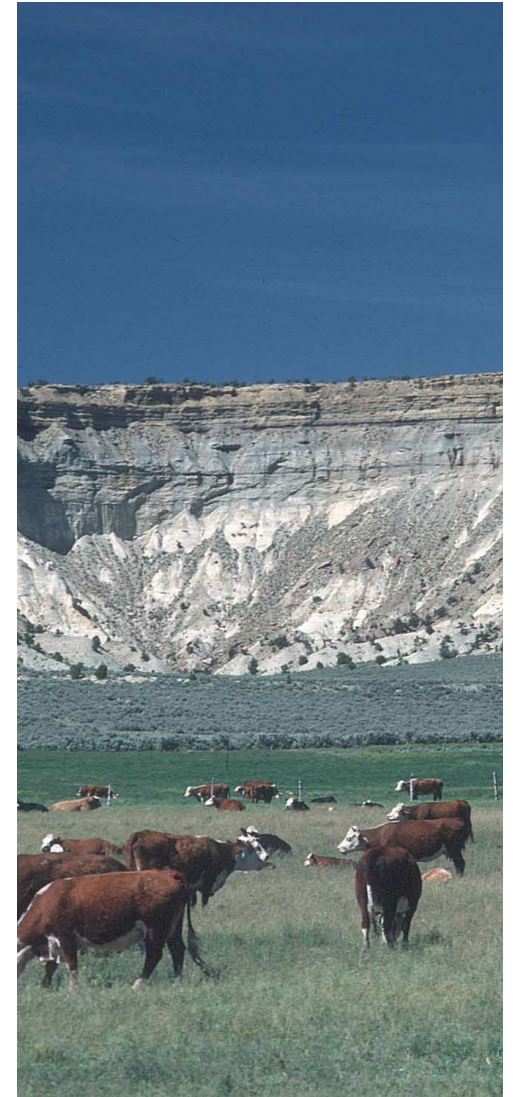
NRCS Practices & Environmental Responsibilities

- NRCS conservation practice standards form the environmental and scientific basis for the majority of NRCS land improvement and land management activities.
- To use innovate methods outside of existing NRCS practices or for watershed projects, NEPA analysis is required at the RCPP project level.
 - Note:** An environmental assessment or environmental impact statement is likely to be required.
- NRCS is responsible for compliance with section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and may not delegate these responsibilities to partners.



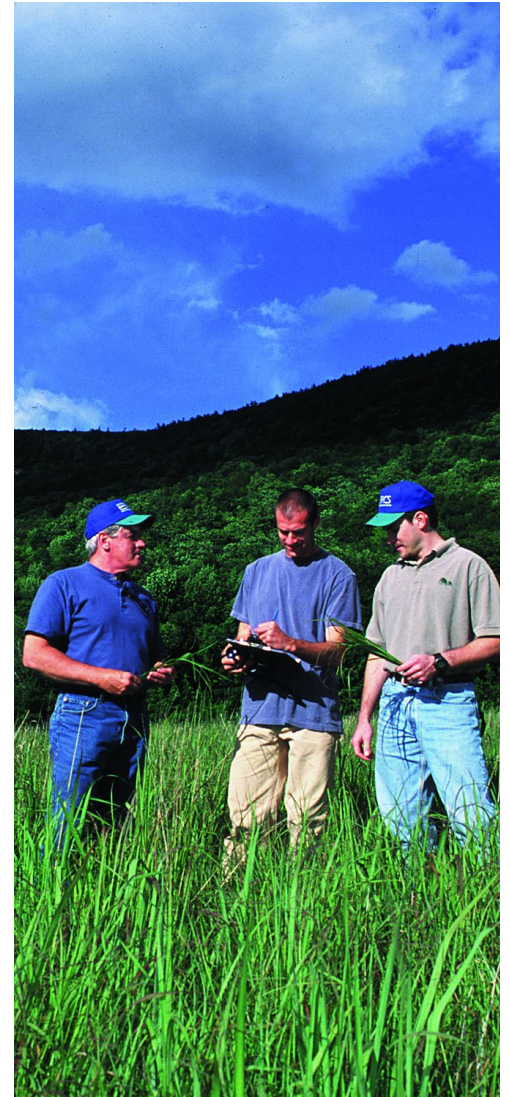
How RCPP Payments Work

- For financial assistance provided to producers/landowners, payments are made after activities are completed and based on NRCS cost schedules.
- For eligible partners, payments are made based on contracted amounts after work has been completed and cannot exceed the actual cost.
- NRCS cannot reimburse partners for indirect costs.



Expectations of the Lead Partner

- To identify the need for specific conservation activities within a specific region.
- To help enroll producers and landowners in NRCS or partner contracts.
- To provide contributions (cash or in-kind) that amplify the impact of NRCS funding.
- To evaluate and report on project outcomes, especially environmental outcomes.
- To coordinate activities and reporting from all project partners.



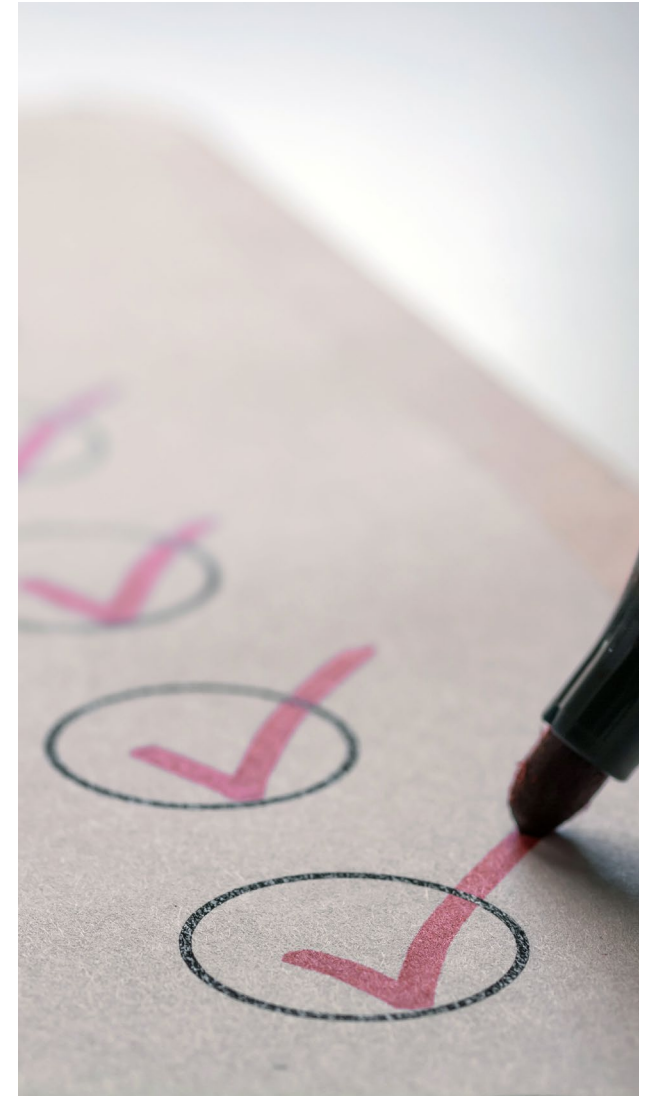
Submitting an RCPP Proposal



What is Included in an RCPP Proposals?

- The geographic area of the project.
- The resource concerns to be addressed.
- A proposed budget for use of NRCS funding to address these resource concerns.
- A list of partner contributions and how they will amplify federal funding
- Any specific work (parcels/easements) targeted by the partner that are potentially critical to the success of the project.

Note: *Identifying specific parcels or producers in advance is not required for RCPP proposals.*



NRCS Funding Request Table

- Financial Assistance Request (75-82%)
 - Complete this section first, as it impacts the amount of TA that can be added.
 - Keep it simple, do you need to specify funds by year? Or can you simply input funds by activity type under the final year of the project?
 - For Classic, you don't need multiple rows for the same FA activity type unless you plan to work in multiple states.
 - If selected, you and NRCS can easily update deliverables to move funding between states based on actual need.



NRCS Funding Request Table

■ Technical Assistance

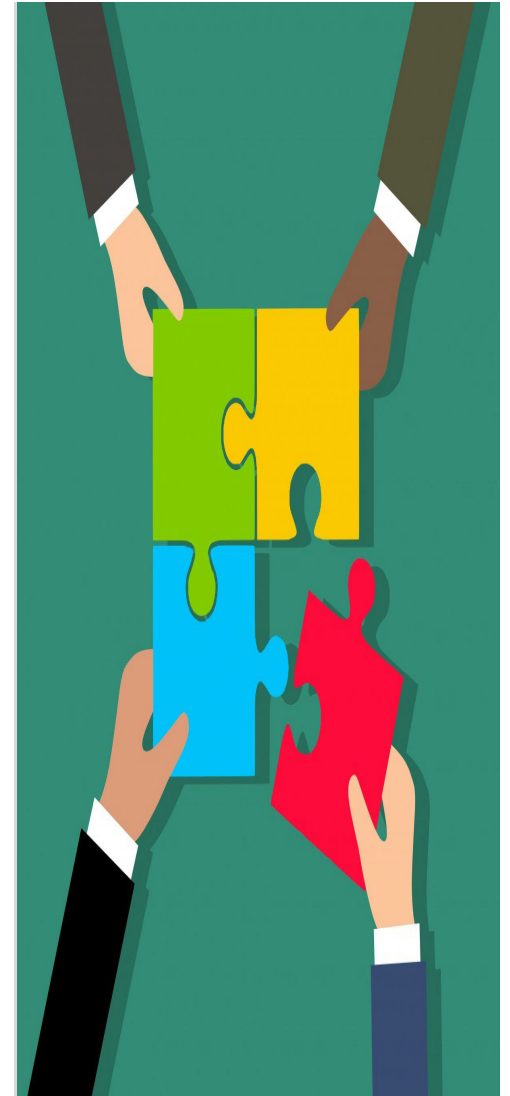
- Enter Enhancement TA first, as the amount of Implementation TA cap is based on the total amount of TA-E and FA request.
- **You do not need separate rows for your different types of Enhancement TA**, create a single row but use the description field to tell us what potential activities are included.
- For partner implementation TA, you only need a single row per FA activity type.

Note: *Most partner implementation TA will be in support of land management or watershed projects. There are limited opportunities for Partner TA in support of Rental or Entity-Held Easements.*



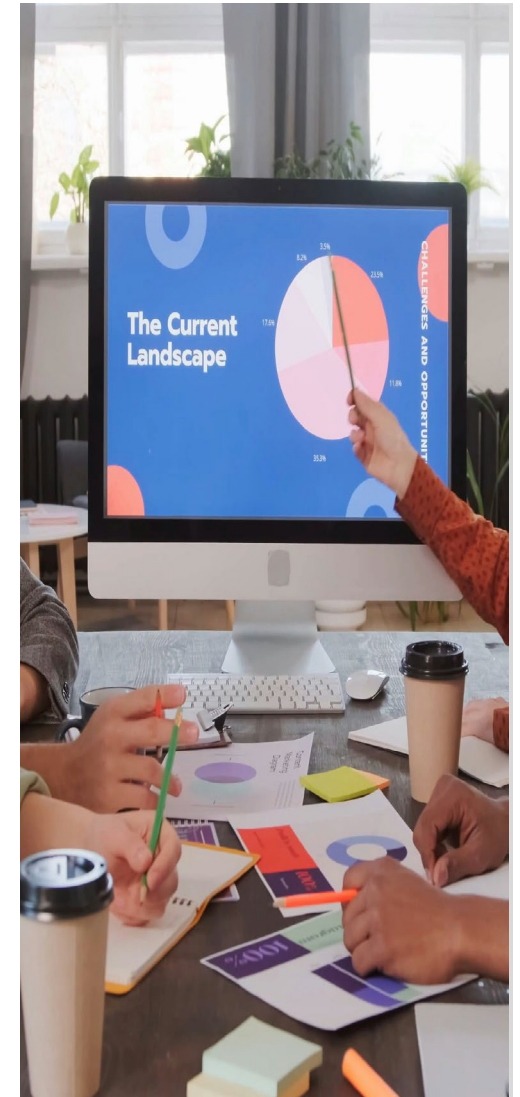
Partner Contributions

- One row per partner per activity type is sufficient.
- Do not add partners that are not providing any contributions.
- Every partner must submit a contribution letter, including the lead partner. The contribution letter has replaced deliverable-specific valuation methodologies.
- Letters of support will not be considered.
- **No minimum contribution is required**, evaluation criteria is more heavily impacted by the impact contributions have on addressing project resource concerns.



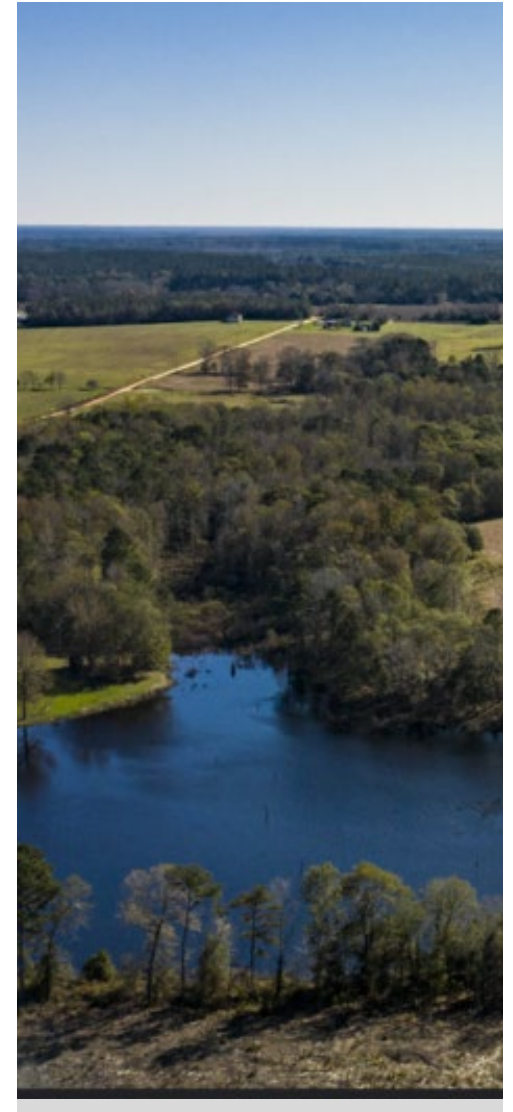
Reporting on Project Outcomes

- Partners are required to report on environmental outcomes.
- Each outcome included in the proposal will become a partner responsibility within the RCPP agreement.
- Social and economic outcomes are encouraged but not required.



Proposal Evaluation Criteria

- **Impact (50%)** – How will the project address resource concerns in the proposed geographic area?
- **Partner Contributions (20%)** – How will contributions amplify the impact of NRCS funding?
- **Partnership & Project Management (30%)**
– How effectively can the experience and resources of the partners support this project?



Inflation Reduction Act Funding

- To be considered for IRA funding proposals must receive an “A” or “B” for their climate smart index.
 - **A** – Projects that provide **climate mitigation** benefits such as reduced greenhouse gas emissions or carbon sequestration.
 - **B** – Projects that help producers and landowners **adapt** to the impact of climate change.
- For easements, NRCS will consider the potential carbon stored (e.g. grasslands and wetlands have greater storage potential).
- \$1.2 billion of the funding available in FY 2024.
- **IRA funded projects, including producer contracts must be completed by FY 2031.**



Things to Consider when Developing an RCPP Proposal.



RCPP & Climate Smart Commodities

Topic	RCPP	Climate-Smart Commodities
Purpose	Partner-driven solutions to conservation on agricultural land	Build markets and invest in America's climate-smart farmers, ranchers, and forest owners to strengthen U.S. rural and agricultural communities
Eligible Activities	Land Management, Rental, Easements, and Public Works (PL-566)	Developing and expanding climate-smart markets, implementing associated climate-smart practices and measuring, monitoring, reporting and verification
Agreement Type	Partnership Agreement (Classic or AFA) with lead partner	Grant with lead partner
Reporting Requirements	Annual performance reports on deliverables, including environmental outcomes	Quarterly and ad hoc reporting and participation in Partnerships Network
Payments to Producers	Directly to Producers for Classic and through a Partner for AFAs	Through Grant Recipient and/or Subrecipients

Flexibility vs Speed

Implementation Plan	Strengths	Challenges
Use a covered program process or model deed (covered program like)	Faster and easier	How is this meeting needs that aren't already covered by other Farm Bill programs?
Use a custom process or template	Addresses needs that other programs can't address, may bring in new customers	Is the partner prepared for a more challenging ramp up period?

Note: Neither option is better, but your proposal must leverage the strengths and plan for the challenges with a given implementation style.



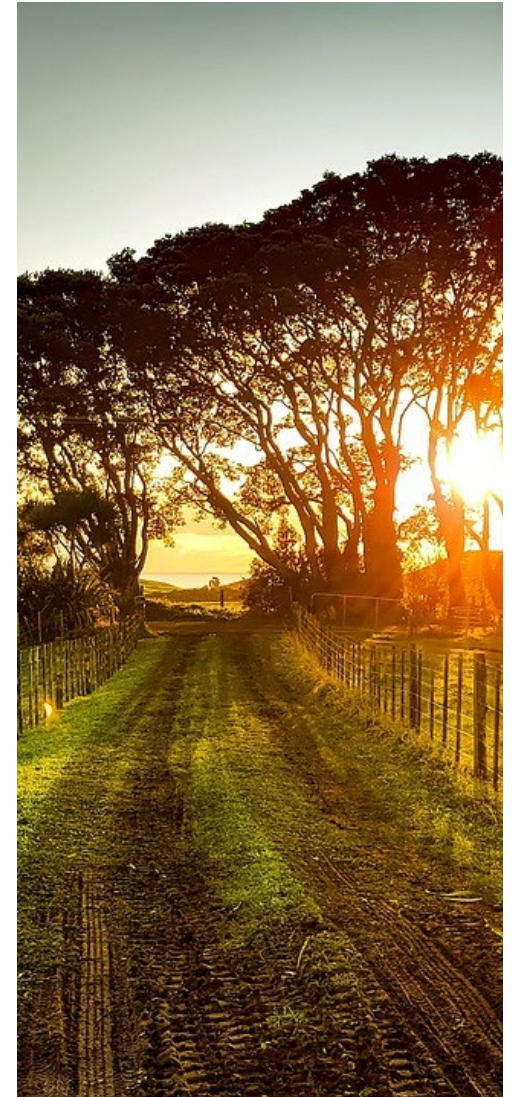
NFO Highlights for FY 2024

- \$1.5 billion total for Classic and AFA projects
- \$100M set-aside for proposals led by a tribe or tribal entity
- One agreement with the lead partner*
- Developing an easement library for model deeds and conservation values statements.
 - For US-Held easements - WRE, HFRP, or other deed templates for US-held easements
 - For Entity-Held easements - ACEP-ALE template



NFO Priority Areas for FY 2024

- Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry
 - This area explains how NRCS will prioritize the use of IRA funding in awards.
- Urban Agriculture
 - Visit usda.gov/urban and sign-up for email updates at farmers.gov/urban.
- Advancing Equity, Justice, & Equal Opportunity
- Projects led by Indian Tribes



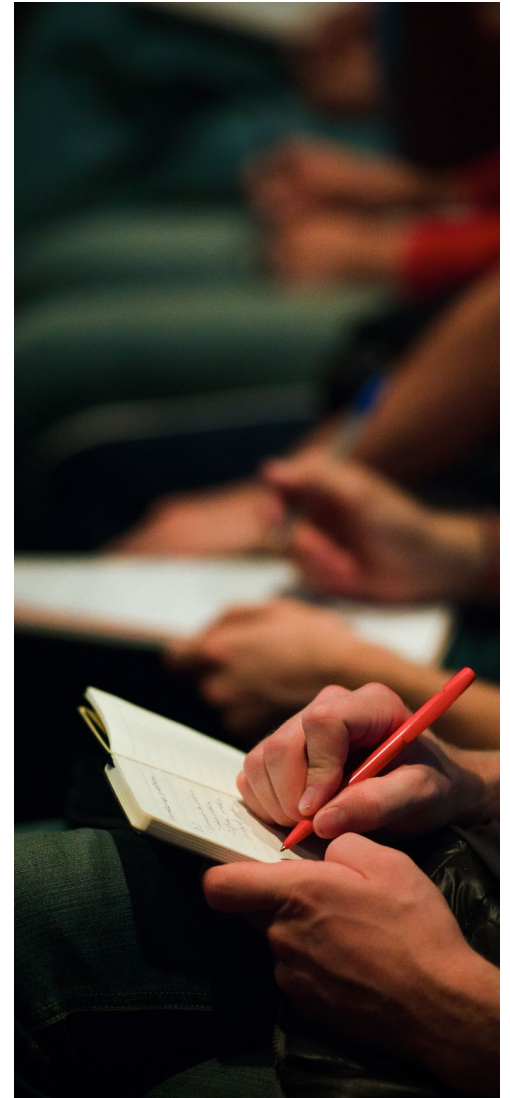
Equity in RCPP

- NRCS will prioritize projects led by Historically Underserved (HU) entities followed by projects with a concrete plan for benefiting HU communities.
- HU is defined as Beginning, Veteran, Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource producers.
- RCPP will also prioritize projects led by or benefiting tribes and tribal entities.
- Be specific and clearly describe
 - known HU communities within your proposal area,
 - your experience collaborating with these communities and,
 - a concrete plan for helping these communities participate in an RCPP project.



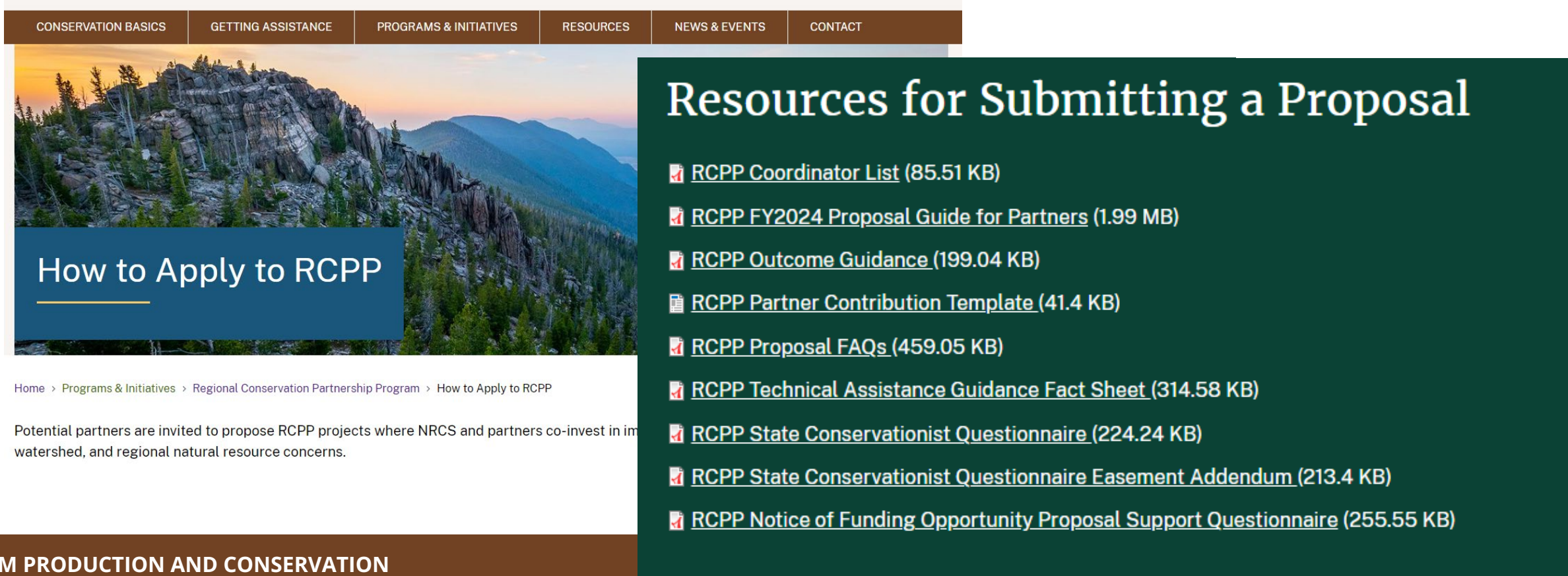
Support for HU-led Proposals

- NRCS will provide support for up to 20 proposals developed by HU entities applying within the CCA funding pool.
- Complete the support questionnaire and submit to RCPP@usda.gov.
- Requests will be accepted through Wednesday May 15th, 2024.
- Requests that are complete and deemed eligible will be approved on a first-come first-serve basis.



Getting Started

Visit the RCPP [How to Apply](#) page for instructions and resources for submitting an RCPP proposal.



The screenshot shows a website navigation bar with the following tabs: CONSERVATION BASICS, GETTING ASSISTANCE, PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES, RESOURCES, NEWS & EVENTS, and CONTACT. Below the navigation bar is a large image of a mountain landscape at sunset. Overlaid on the image is a blue box with the text "How to Apply to RCPP". To the right of the image is a dark green box with the title "Resources for Submitting a Proposal" and a list of nine downloadable resources, each with a document icon and a file size.

CONSERVATION BASICS GETTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES RESOURCES NEWS & EVENTS CONTACT

How to Apply to RCPP

Home > Programs & Initiatives > Regional Conservation Partnership Program > How to Apply to RCPP

Potential partners are invited to propose RCPP projects where NRCS and partners co-invest in improving the watershed, and regional natural resource concerns.

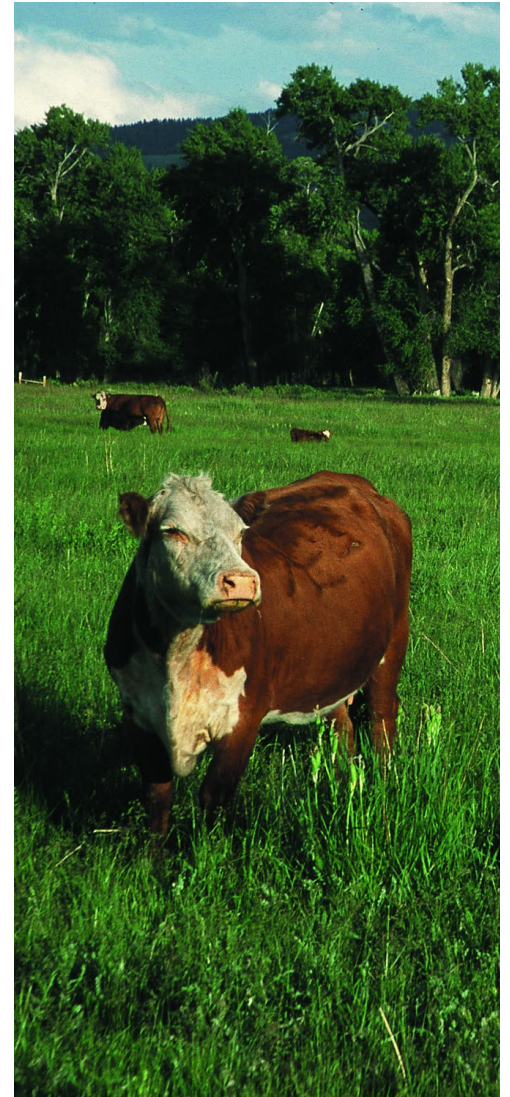
Resources for Submitting a Proposal

- [RCPP Coordinator List \(85.51 KB\)](#)
- [RCPP FY2024 Proposal Guide for Partners \(1.99 MB\)](#)
- [RCPP Outcome Guidance \(199.04 KB\)](#)
- [RCPP Partner Contribution Template \(41.4 KB\)](#)
- [RCPP Proposal FAQs \(459.05 KB\)](#)
- [RCPP Technical Assistance Guidance Fact Sheet \(314.58 KB\)](#)
- [RCPP State Conservationist Questionnaire \(224.24 KB\)](#)
- [RCPP State Conservationist Questionnaire Easement Addendum \(213.4 KB\)](#)
- [RCPP Notice of Funding Opportunity Proposal Support Questionnaire \(255.55 KB\)](#)

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION

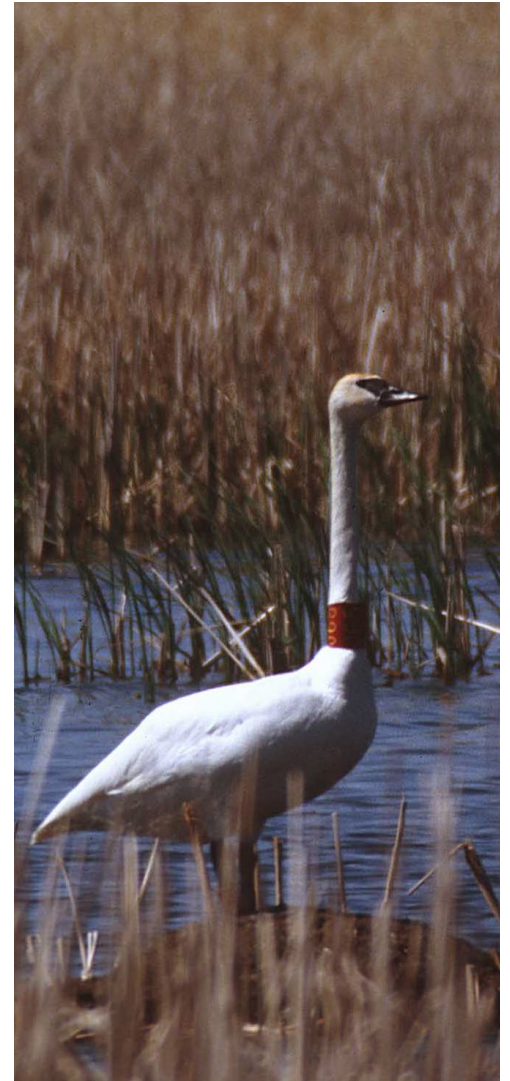
Getting Started (cont.)

- Get Access to the RCPP Portal. For new accounts:
 - **First** - Obtain a Login.gov credential before requesting a new portal account.
 - **Second** – Submit a new account request at the [RCPP portal homepage](#).
- Schedule a meeting with your local [RCPP Coordinator](#).
- Review the funding opportunity language and the [RCPP FY 2024 Proposal Guide for Partners](#).



FY 2024 Timeline

- **Proposals are due Tuesday July 2nd, 2024 at 5pm Eastern Time.**
 - Proposals will not be accepted by email.
 - Late proposals will only be accepted when a portal glitch is documented in a help desk ticket submitted prior to the proposal deadline.
 - Late proposals will not be accepted due to failure to obtain a login.gov credential far in advance of the deadline.
- NRCS anticipates announcing awards by October 2024.
- Proposals should plan for a start date at or before March 2025.



Question & Answers

To submit a question for the Q&A portion please send it to RCPP@usda.gov at any point during the webinar.



For More Information

Please visit: [How to Apply](#)

For a list of State RCPP Coordinators please visit the [How to Apply](#) page and go to the section called "Resources for Submitting a Proposal".

National RCPP Team: RCPP@usda.gov

